

03933 U.S. PTO
07/29/97

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U.S.A.

Date: July 28, 1997
Our File: 577P01US

65431 U.S. PTO
08/902299
07/29/97

Sir:

Transmitted herewith for filing is the patent application of

Inventor: Peter R. Mignault


For: GROUND FAULT DETECTOR FOR GAS DISCHARGE TUBING

Enclosed are also:

- ☒ Small entity status form.
- ☒ One sheet of informal drawings.
- ☒ An assignment of the invention to Neonics Technology Inc.
- ☐ Certified copy of the priority application.

<u>For</u>	<u>Claims Filed</u>	<u>Extra Rate</u>	<u>Basic Fee</u>
			\$385.00
Total Claims	13 - 20 =	x \$11.00 =	
Independent claims	2 - 3 =	x \$40.00 =	
Multiple dep. claims - per application		\$130.00 =	
Assignment recordal fee		\$40.00 =	40.00
TOTAL FILING FEE --			\$425.00

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- ☒ Money Order No. 15948176-111 in the amount of \$425.00 U.S. dated July 25, 1997 is enclosed to cover the
☒ filing fee and ☒ assignment recording fee.


.....
Robert A. Wilkes
Registration 28170

PASCAL & ASSOCIATES,
P.O. Box 11121, Station H,
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada, K2H 7T8

08/902299

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Robert A. Wilkes
Registration 28170

PASCAL & ASSOCIATES,
P.O. Box 11121, Station H,
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada, K2H 7T8

08902229-072997

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADE MARKS OFFICE

In re Application of:)
)
PETER R. MIGNAUTL)
)
Serial No: unknown) Claim for Priority
) Under 35 USC 119
Filed On: even date herewith)
)
For: GROUND FAULT DETECTOR FOR)
GAS DISCHARGE TUBING)

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U.S.A.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to the field of ground fault detectors, and particularly ground fault detectors used in high voltage circuits.

5 BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

Ground fault detectors are used in high voltage circuits such as in ballasts which drive gas discharge tubes such as neon display tubes. A ground fault detector is used to safeguard current carrying circuits, detecting leakage current to ground and shutting off the power supply of the ballast in the event the leakage current exceeds a predetermined value. Excessive leakage current can cause arcing, which can cause fire or can be lethal, and therefore maximum leakage is regulated by standards.

One of the conventional ways of controlling the shut-off of the high voltage is to monitor the alternating current which is returned to ground carried by the center tap of the high voltage secondary winding of a high voltage transformer. In the event the high voltage leads of the secondary winding are conducting to ground, causing current to flow from the center tap to ground, a current transformer reflects this back to a shutdown circuit. Examples of circuits which use this principle are described in U.S. patents 4,663,571 to Nilssen and U.S. patents 4,613,934 and 5,089,572 to Pacholok.

Another conventional way of controlling shut-down of a high voltage circuit is to detect the inherent phase shift between current and voltage when the high voltage is radiated capacitively to ground. However, the realized circuit requires a phase discriminator circuit and a high parts count, which is costly.

A typical ground fault detector is comprised of a solid state switch which accepts a trigger voltage and

conducts to operate a relay, etc. when the trigger voltage is exceeded. The relay operates switch contacts in the power supply, shutting down the power supply. The trigger voltage is derived by detecting the leakage
5 current and converting this current to a voltage which is rectified and is applied to the solid state switch, which will operate if the voltage, and thus the current, is large enough. Ground fault detector circuits of this type are described, for example, in U.S. patents
10 4,114,089 to Ahmed, 3,899,717 to Legatti et al and 4,138,707 to Gross.

The leakage current detected in the aforementioned structures constitutes radiated or reactive alternating current, similar to current emitted from a radio
15 frequency transmitter. The return energy is purely capacitive to ground. If the energy emitted by both high voltage leads (e.g. the antennae) of the secondary winding of the high voltage transformer of the ballast is not balanced capacitively, a current will flow
20 through the center tap of the secondary winding to ground, creating an A.C. voltage which is detected as leakage current, and causing a false shutdown of the power supply.

It has been determined that hazardous arcing to
25 ground can be detected solely from the D.C. current flowing from a D.C. biased winding to ground, rather than from the A.C. reactive current to ground. The systems described above shut down in the presence of A.C. reactive current, even without the presence of
30 additional resistive current, which causes the false shutdown. The prior art systems are thus not reliable detectors of the hazardous currents.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a ground fault detector
35 circuit which ignores the A.C. leakage current caused by

radiation, unbalanced radiation current, etc., and provides a trigger voltage which is caused by true direct current leakage during dielectric breakdown. It generates the trigger voltage by short circuiting A.C. leakage current, and detects only D.C. (resistive path) leakage current, applying a voltage derived from the D.C. leakage current to the trigger input of a solid state switching device such as a programmable shunt regulator.

10 The present invention thus provides reliable detection and high voltage shut down for D.C. leakage current which would otherwise be hazardous, ignoring A.C. radiated current.

15 In accordance with an embodiment of the invention, a method of shutting down a power supply which drives a transformer having a center-tapped high voltage secondary winding, comprises short circuiting A.C. leakage current that may flow between the secondary winding and ground, detecting D.C. voltage caused by D.C. leakage current which may be conducted between the D.C. biased secondary winding and ground, applying the D.C. voltage to the control input of a switch, and controlling shut-down of the power supply by means of the switch.

25 In accordance with another embodiment, a ground fault circuit comprises (a) a power supply, and a transformer having a primary winding driven by the power supply and a high voltage secondary winding, (b) a shutdown control circuit having a controllable switch and a control input coupled to the controllable switch for causing operation of the controllable switch when a trigger voltage applied to the control input is exceeded, the shutdown control circuit being coupled to the power supply for controlling shut-down of the power supply when the switch is in operation, (c) a circuit

connected to the high voltage secondary winding for detecting leakage current from the D.C. biased transformer to ground, for short circuiting an A.C. component of the leakage current passing through the detector to ground, and for deriving a D.C. voltage from D.C. leakage current from the transformer to ground, and (d) a circuit for applying the derived D.C. voltage to the control input of the shutdown control circuit, whereby the power supply may be shut down in the presence of leakage current in excess of the trigger voltage which is derived exclusively from D.C. current leakage from the transformer to ground.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE DRAWINGS

A better understanding of the invention will be obtained from an understanding of the detailed description below, with reference to the following drawing, in which:

Figure 1 is a schematic drawing of a preferred embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

A power supply 1, for example one which drives a neon gas discharge tube, has a shutdown control input which, when driven by a voltage VCC, shuts down the power supply in a conventional manner. A loosely coupled transformer is comprised of a primary winding 3 which is driven by the power supply, and a high voltage secondary winding 5. Ends V1 and V2 of the secondary winding are to be connected to a gas discharge tube.

The secondary winding has a center tap CT, and a balanced pair of taps A and B on either side of the center tap for obtaining a small representative portion of the high voltage produced by the secondary winding. A pair of diodes D1 and D2 having their cathodes connected to the respective taps, have their anodes connected together and to the negative terminal of a

capacitor C1. The positive terminal of capacitor C1 is connected via resistor R1 to the center tap of secondary winding 5.

The diodes rectify the small portion of the high voltage, resulting in a D.C. voltage across capacitor C1 which has been charged through resistor R1. This D.C. voltage creates a D.C. bias of the center tap with respect to the potential at the negative terminal of capacitor C1. In a successful embodiment, the D.C. voltage across capacitor C1 was 25 volts.

Capacitor C2 and resistor R2 are connected in parallel between the negative terminal of capacitor C1 and ground. This provides an A.C. shunt path to ground, to maintain a low A.C. voltage from the center tap CT of the secondary winding 5 to ground, via the path R1, C1, C2 and R2.

If there is A.C. radiated leakage current between the secondary winding 5 and ground, this current is short circuited by capacitor C2.

If there is no D.C. leakage current from the D.C. biased transformer secondary winding to ground (e.g. caused by dielectric breakdown), there will be no net D.C. voltage across capacitor C2. Thus the D.C. potential at the negative terminal of capacitor C1 will be the same as that at the positive terminal of capacitor C2, i.e. ground potential.

However, if there is D.C. leakage to ground, capacitor C2 will begin to charge. The voltage will appear across resistor R2, which is applied to the control input of a shutdown control circuit 7. The value of resistor R2 should be chosen to trigger control circuit 7 if a predetermined D.C. leakage current level is reached.

The shutdown control circuit 7 is preferably comprised of a programmable shunt regulator U1, which

has a switch control input 9. The shunt regulator is functionally similar to an NPN bipolar transistor in operation, except that the threshold voltage to turn it on (into a conducting state from anode to cathode) is about 2.5 volts.

The cathode of shunt regulator U1 is connected to one terminal of the photodiode (e.g. light emitting diode) of an optocoupler U2, the other terminal of which is connected via a current limiting resistor R4 to the positive terminal of capacitor C1. The anode of shunt regulator U1 is connected to the junction of the negative terminals of capacitors C1 and C2 and the anodes of diodes D1 and D2.

Resistor R3 is connected between the control terminal of shunt regulator U1 and ground. Thus the voltage across resistor R2 is applied between the control input of shunt regulator U1 through resistor R3 and the anode of shunt regulator U1.

In operation, when the D.C. voltage caused by D.C. leakage to ground from the D.C. biased secondary winding 5 of transformer T1 is equal to or is in excess of the turn-on voltage of shunt regulator U1, e.g. 2.5 volts or higher, shunt regulator U1 is triggered, and it becomes conductive between its cathode and anode. Current resulting from the rectified voltage which appears across capacitor C1 from transformer T1, passes through the photodiode of optocoupler U2 and shunt regulator U1, causing the phototransistor in the optocoupler which is connected between the VCC and the shutdown terminals of the power supply 1 to conduct, causing the power supply to shut down. The inverter in the ballast is thereby triggered to shut down.

In addition, it is preferred to connect resistor R5 across the light emitting diode of optocoupler U2, to prevent the optocoupler from turning on as a result of

anode to cathode leakage current of the shunt regulator. A diode D5 is also preferred to be connected across the photodiode of the optocoupler U2 in oppositely poled direction to the light emitting diode, to prevent damage to the photodiode from reverse voltage spikes. A diode D4 is connected between the control input and the anode of the shunt regulator U1, with its anode connected to the anode of the shunt regulator, to protect the shunt regulator from reverse voltage spikes.

10 A diode D3 is preferably connected across the shunt regulator U1 in the same polarity direction, as a limiting shunt to protect the shunt regulator from damage in case the secondary winding voltage goes to high, and to protect the shunt regulator from reverse voltage spikes. If diode D3 is caused to conduct from one of these two events, it will cause the optocoupler to operate, and will thereby trigger the power supply and therefore the inverter to shut down as if the shunt regulator had turned on from D.C. ground fault current. 15 Thus the inverter is provided with monitoring of excessive voltage in the high voltage secondary winding 5.

25 A person skilled in the art understanding the above description may now consider other embodiments using the principles described above. All such embodiments which are within the spirit and scope of the claims appended hereto are considered to be part of the present invention.

I claim:

1. A ground fault circuit comprising:
- (a) a power supply, and a transformer having a
5 primary winding driven by the power supply and a high
voltage secondary winding,
- (b) a shutdown control circuit having a controllable
switch and a control input coupled to the controllable
switch for causing operation of the controllable switch
10 when a trigger voltage applied to the control input is
exceeded, the shutdown control circuit being coupled to
the power supply for controlling shut-down of the power
supply when the switch is in operation,
- (c) a circuit connected to the high voltage
15 secondary winding for detecting leakage current from the
transformer to ground, for short circuiting an A.C.
component of the leakage current passing through the
detector to ground, and for deriving a D.C. voltage from
D.C. leakage current from the transformer to ground, and
20 (d) a circuit for applying the derived D.C. voltage
to the control input of the shutdown control circuit,
whereby the power supply may be shut down in the
presence of leakage current in excess of the trigger
voltage which is derived exclusively from D.C. current
25 leakage from the transformer to ground.
2. A circuit as defined in claim 1 in which the
secondary winding is center-tapped, and in which the
detecting circuit is connected between the center tap
30 and ground.
3. A circuit as defined in claim 2 in which the
detecting circuit and the short circuiting circuit are
comprised of a capacitor connected in parallel with a
35 resistor having one junction connected to ground and

another junction coupled to the center tap, the capacitor and resistor being coupled to the control input of the control circuit.

5 4. A circuit as defined in claim 3 including a circuit for deriving a bias D.C. voltage from the secondary winding and for applying the bias D.C. voltage across the controllable switch.

10 5. A circuit as defined in claim 4 in which the circuit for deriving a bias D.C. voltage from the secondary winding is comprised of a rectifier circuit connected across a fraction of the secondary winding, the detecting circuit and short circuiting circuit being
15 connected to the rectifier circuit.

6. A circuit as defined in claim 5 in which the circuit for deriving a D.C. voltage is connected between a center tap of the secondary winding and balanced
20 spaced taps of the secondary winding on either side of the center tap.

7. A circuit as defined in claim 2 in which the detecting circuit is comprised of a rectifier circuit
25 connected to an off-center tap of the secondary winding, and a first capacitor in series with a first resistor connected between the rectifier circuit and the center tap of the secondary winding.

30 8. A circuit as defined in claim 7 in which the rectifier circuit is comprised of a full wave rectifier comprised of a pair of diodes having cathodes connected to respective off-center taps located at balanced locations of the secondary winding, the anodes of the
35 diodes being connected together to a negative terminal

of the first capacitor, the positive terminal of the first capacitor being connected to a terminal of the first resistor, the detecting circuit further comprising a second capacitor having a negative terminal connected to the junction of the first capacitor and the anodes of the diodes, and having a positive terminal connected to ground, and a second resistor connected in parallel with the second capacitor, the second capacitor and second resistor being coupled to the control input of the switch.

9. A circuit as defined in claim 8 in which the first capacitor is coupled to the switch for applying a D.C. voltage appearing across the first capacitor, across the switch.

10. A circuit as defined in claim 9 in which the switch is comprised of a switchable solid state device having said control input, connected in series with a light emitting diode of an optocoupler, a light sensitive device of the optocoupler being coupled to a shutdown control input of the power supply, D.C. voltage appearing across the first capacitor being applied through current limiting means across the series combination of the switchable solid state device and light emitting diode of the optocoupler.

11. A circuit as defined in claim 10 in which the switch is a programmable shunt regulator having its anode connected to the junction of the anodes of the pair of diodes and the negative terminal of the first capacitor, and further including a third resistor connected between the control input of the shunt regulator and ground.

12. A method of shutting down a power supply which drives a transformer having a center-tapped high voltage secondary winding, comprising short circuiting A.C. leakage current that may flow between the secondary winding and ground, detecting D.C. voltage caused by D.C. leakage current which may be conducted between the D.C. biased secondary winding and ground, applying the D.C. voltage to the control input of a switch, and controlling shut-down of the power supply by means of the switch.

13. A method as defined in claim 12 including tapping a fraction of A.C. voltage appearing across the high voltage secondary winding, rectifying the fraction of the A.C. voltage to derive a D.C. bias voltage, applying the D.C. bias voltage to the transformer, and applying the D.C. bias voltage across the switch for operation thereof.

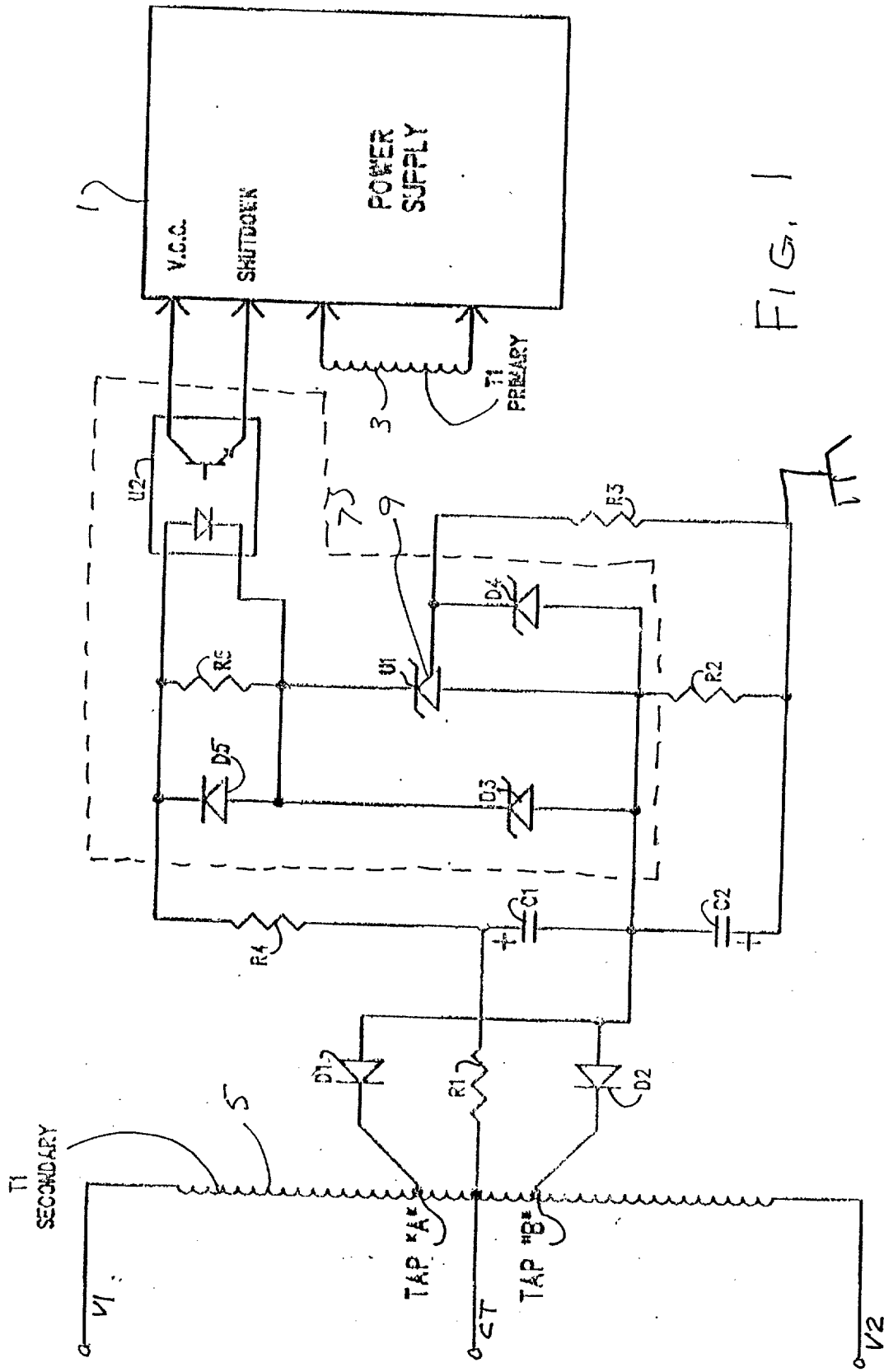


FIG. 1

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR PATENT APPLICATION

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled **GROUND FAULT DETECTOR FOR GAS DISCHARGE TUBING** the specification of which (check one)

 X is attached hereto.

 was filed on as
Application Serial No.
and was amended on

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations §1.56(a).

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, §119 of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

Prior Foreign Applications(s)

Priority Claimed

<u>2,193,909</u> (Number)	<u>Canada</u> (Country)	<u>24 12 1996</u> (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<u> X </u> Yes	<u> </u> No
<u> </u> (Number)	<u> </u> (Country)	<u> </u> (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<u> </u> Yes	<u> </u> No
<u> </u> (Number)	<u> </u> (Country)	<u> </u> (Day/Month/Year Filed)	<u> </u> Yes	<u> </u> No

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, §120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT International filing date of this application.

<u> </u> (Application Serial No.)	<u> </u> (Filing Date)	<u> </u> (Status) (patented, pending, abandoned)
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<u> </u> (Application Serial No.)	<u> </u> (Filing Date)	<u> </u> (Status) (patented, pending, abandoned)
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X P. P. P.

- 2 -

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

POWER OF ATTORNEY: As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or agents(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trade Mark Office connected therewith.

EDWARD E. PASCAL - Reg. 22934 SUSAN D. BEAUBIEN - Reg. 37571
ROBERT A. WILKES - Reg. 28170 ROBERT G. HENDRY - Reg. 22927

Send correspondence to:

PASCAL & ASSOCIATES,
P.O. Box 11121, Station "H",
Nepean, Ontario,
Canada, K2H 7T8

Direct Telephone calls to: Edward E. Pascal
at telephone No. (613)820-1366.

Full Name of sole or first inventor
PETER R. MIGNAULT

Date

JULY 27, 1997

Inventor's signature

P. Mignault

Residence

245 Dorval Avenue, Apt. 20, Dorval, Quebec, Canada, H9S 3H5

Citizenship

Canadian

Post Office Address

245 Dorval Avenue, Apt. 20, Dorval, Quebec, Canada, H9S 3H5

Full Name of second joint inventor

Date

Inventor's signature

Residence

Citizenship

Post Office Address

Applicant or Patentee: Peter R. Mignault Attorney's
 Serial or Patent No.: unknown Docket No.: 577P01US
 Filed or Issued: filed on even date
 For: GROUND FAULT DETECTOR FOR GAS DISCHARGE TUBING

VERIFIED STATEMENT (DECLARATION) CLAIMING SMALL ENTITY
 STATUS (37 CFR 1.9 (f) and 1.27 (c)) — SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN

I hereby declare that I am

- ☐ the owner of the small business concern identified below;
☐ an official of the small business concern empowered to act on behalf of the concern identified below;

NAME OF CONCERN Neonics Technology Inc.
 ADDRESS OF CONCERN 338-B Lakeshore
Pointe-Claire, Quebec
Canada, H9S 4L7

I hereby declare that the above identified small business concern qualifies as a small business concern as defined in 13 CFR 121.3-18, and reproduced in 37 CFR 1.9 (d), for purposes of paying reduced fees under section 41(a) and (b) of Title 35, United States Code, in that the number of employees of the concern, including those of its affiliates, does not exceed 500 persons. For purposes of this statement, (1) the number of employees of the business concern is the average over the previous fiscal year of the concern of the persons employed on a full-time, part-time or temporary basis during each of the pay periods of the fiscal year, and (2) concerns are affiliates of each other when either, directly or indirectly, one concern controls or has the power to control the other, or a third party or parties controls or has the power to control both.

I hereby declare that rights under contract or law have been conveyed to and remain with the small business concern identified above with regard to the invention, entitled Ground Fault Detector for Gas
Discharge Tubing by inventor(s)
Peter R. Mignault described in

- ☒ the specification filed herewith
☐ application serial no. _____, filed _____
☐ patent no. _____, issued _____

If the rights held by the above identified small business concern are not exclusive, each individual, concern or organization having rights to the invention is listed below* and no rights to the invention are held by any person, other than the inventor, who could not qualify as a small business concern under 37 CFR 1.9 (d) or by any concern which would not qualify as a small business concern under 37 CFR 1.9 (d) or a nonprofit organization under 37 CFR 1.9 (e).

*NOTE: Separate verified statements are required from each named person, concern or organization having rights to the invention averring to their status as small entities. (37 CFR 1.27)

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
☐ INDIVIDUAL ☐ SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN ☐ NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
☐ INDIVIDUAL ☐ SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN ☐ NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

I acknowledge the duty to file, in this application or patent, notification of any change in status resulting in loss of entitlement to small entity status prior to paying, or at the time of paying, the earliest of the issue fee or any maintenance fee due after the date on which status as a small entity is no longer appropriate. (37 CFR 1.28 (b))

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application, any patent issuing thereon, or any patent to which this verified statement is directed.

NAME OF PERSON SIGNING BUDDY A.T. BAKER
 TITLE OF PERSON OTHER THAN OWNER President
 ADDRESS OF PERSON SIGNING 26A POINTE-CLAIRE AVENUE, POINTE-CLAIRE
QUEBEC, CANADA, H9S 4L7

SIGNATURE Buddy Baker

DATE JULY 27, 1997

00002299-072597